

**Edward Ray, Chief
Department of Safety and Security
Denver Public Schools**

The SDFSCA State Grants Program:

Currently as implemented, what are the strengths of the SDFSCA State Grants Program? What are the elements of the State Grants Program that are working and addressing the needs of students and schools today?

Response:

Those I have surveyed feel that the States Grants Program are working effectively, in that the grants provide vital funding to school districts to conduct programs that may not otherwise be possible, due to general fund budgetary reductions and constraints.

It is felt that the greatest element to the States Grants Program that is working is the flexibility in how to use the allocated funds. It is felt that this flexibility provides for the development of new programs gleaned from best practices and to pursue programs that have a high degree of efficacy that have a direct impact on the safety of students and staff.

The grants program encourages grant recipients to interact with other local resources, such as mental health, drug and alcohol counseling organizations, various law enforcement awareness and interdictive programs and others.

Is the SDFSCA State Grants Program working effectively to promote safe and drug-free schools across the country, specifically in rural, urban and suburban settings? What are the difficulties in determining the effectiveness of the program? Are there mechanisms that could be proposed that would help determine if programs being supported with SDFSCA State Grants Program funds are effective in meeting program purposes?

Response:

Yes, in the urban and suburban because of the additional resources and the encouraged interaction between. This may be slightly different in the rural settings due to limitations of these additional available resources.

The difficulties in determining the effectiveness of the program lies in the lack of interactions between grantees, the lack of baseline data bases and grantee focus groups to determine the efficacy of programs that are be presented.

Those surveyed felt that their are so many very small programs that are implemented at schools that have promise but are not researched based as to effectiveness. Programs such as drug awareness and resistance, character education, some counter bullying programs, stranger danger, use of high technology to detect and deter negative behavior and other similar small and non-curriculum based programs. Most feel that these types of programs have an impact but there does not seem to be any data to rely upon, therefore the effectiveness is measured through largely empirical or anecdotal evidence and not scientifically researched.

Mechanisms that could be considered:

- Establish follow-up survey's with attendee's of programs, three to five years after, to see how they are doing.
- Base lining by programs the occurrence of crime and incidents to analyze reductions.
- Establish a state wide reporting system.
- The use of surveys is used in many district to determine effectiveness but largely this is subjective and empirical and may not always be the most accurate measure.

Are there emerging issues facing students and schools today that the SDFSCA State Grant Program does not address and should they be addressed in the SDFSCA State Grants Program?

Response:

- One issue that needs to be addressed is how educational technology and security technology can be interfaced. Truancy reduction and open access to campuses is critical. Controlling students ability to enter or leave campuses and the ability to identify them by security and law enforcement is very difficult. Technology can assist, however the initial costs and sustainability of these programs is frequently more than existing general funds allow. The states grants program does not clearly speak to growing issue.
- A concern that the public has is to the ability of non student or staff physical entry into schools,(IE: Beslin Russia), although low on the occurrence probability scale, creates another technological issue as to access control of buildings 24/7.
- The financial ability to provide interfaced student activity (free food, library, student identification,) technology
- It is not clear in the grants programs that funding for technology should be utilized as it is not researched based as to effectiveness. Lets hope that we never have to find out technologies effectiveness in protecting our students and staff.

The SDFSCA State Grants Program includes a focus on safety. Sec. 4114 (d)(7) states that recipients of the SDFSCA State Grants must have “a plan for keeping schools safe and drug-free” including, a “crisis management plan”. Considering the Nation’s focus on emergency response and crisis planning is this language sufficient to address the concern for crisis management in our schools or are? Are further guidance or other steps necessary to address this concern?

Response:

The language in Sec. 4114 (d)(7) appears to be adequate. The recent ERCM grants have assisted many districts with funding to develop the plans but again the sustainability for the training costs as well as revisions are very difficult. Training of schools staff, especially in the large urban and suburban districts is in a constant and frequently losing struggle with NCLB educational improvement. Simply put there is not enough time for educational staff development and staff development regarding developing and implementing school safety plans. This is in large part leading to non-compliance concerns of state statutes.

Is the structure of the SDCFCA State Grants Program (awarding funds to the State Education Agency and the Governor), the most effective mechanism for the use of these funds?

Response:

Some feel that it would be more effective if the funds were allocated directly to school districts, but do favor, to at a minimum to keep it at the state level, as centralizing it in Washington D.C. will make it more unwieldy.

Is the balance between flexibility and accountability contained in the statute working? Could State and local flexibility be balanced with additional core requirements that would encourage LEAs to address specific issues?

Response:

Yes

How can the tension between the *Principles of Effectiveness* provisions that require that funds be spent on research-based activities and the broad list of authorized activities (many of which lack a strong research base) be resolved?

Response:

Consider that not all programs can be researched based. Sometimes common sense applications of programs regardless if they are educational or technological based must be used. The times are changing and we must be flexible enough to think outside of the box and incorporate different approaches to how we protect our students and staff. Local funds for new non-educational based programs are becoming scarce because of redirection of these funds to education and essentially are causing the deterioration of existing non-educational programs.